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SPECIAL POLITICAL AND DECOLONIZATION COMMITTEE (FOURTH COMMITTEE)
6th meeting
held on
Thursday, 13 October 1994
at 3 p.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 6th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. HUDYMA (Ukraine)

later: Mr. SAMANA (Papua New Guinea)
(Vice-Chairman)

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 18: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES (Territories not covered under other agenda items)

Hearing of petitioners

AGENDA ITEM 18: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES (Territories not covered under other agenda items)* (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 81: INFORMATION FROM NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES TRANSMITTED UNDER ARTICLE 73 e OF THE CHARTER OF THE UNITED NATIONS* (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 82: ACTIVITIES OF FOREIGN ECONOMIC AND OTHER INTERESTS WHICH IMPEDE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES IN TERRITORIES UNDER COLONIAL DOMINATION* (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 83: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES BY THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS ASSOCIATED WITH THE UNITED NATIONS* (continued)

* Items which the Committee has decided to consider together. /...

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CONTENTS (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 12: REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL* (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 84: OFFERS BY MEMBER STATES OF STUDY AND TRAINING FACILITIES FOR INHABITANTS OF NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES* (continued)

The meeting was called to order at 3.30 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 18: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES (Territories not covered under other agenda items) (continued)

Hearing of petitioners

Question of New Caledonia (A/C.4/49/5)

1. At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Winslow (Front de libération nationale kanak socialiste) took a place at the petitioners' table.

2. Ms. WINSLOW, speaking on behalf of the Front de libération nationale kanak socialiste (FLNKS), said that because of the balance of power and because the Kanak people was so small that it was in danger of disappearing and was refusing assimilation, FLNKS, by successive stages in its struggle, had been forced to compromise, and had signed the Matignon Accords with a view to building a new independent nation, Kanaky. FLNKS welcomed the support of the United Nations, as well as that of the Non-aligned Movement, the South Pacific Forum and the Melanesian Spearhead Group.

3. The reaffirmation by those international bodies of the need to implement the Declaration on decolonization reflected the persistent reality of the colonial system which many administering Powers were still trying to disguise. France was obstinately refusing to assume the obligations deriving from the reinclusion of New Caledonia in the list of countries to be decolonized and was engaging in political and diplomatic initiatives for the purpose of minimizing the colonial reality in New Caledonia and thwarting the exercise by the Kanak people of their right to independence and dignity. For the period of the Matignon Accords, the aim of FLNKS, in accordance with paragraph 3 of General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV), was to prepare for independence, redressing the ethnic, social, legal, financial and economic imbalances inherent to colonial society while establishing the means for economic, financial and political independence. It called upon the entire country, and the French Government, to work towards that aim, and requested the support of the United Nations.

4. Six years after the signing of the Matignon Accords, the situation was disappointing, particularly since the provinces had different political objectives. The North and Loyalty Islands provinces, administered by the pro-independence forces, had undertaken major programmes of public and infrastructure in order to overcome isolation, provide basic services for the people and help them become involved in building the country. In the South province, administered by the right-wing forces, where three quarters of the population lived, the emphasis had been placed on economic development, health, youth, social affairs and urban development. In violation of the spirit of the Matignon Accords, Grand Nouméa was being developed to the detriment of other rural communes of the South province. The provincial authorities there were using the resources available to strengthen the control of economic interest

groups of the Rassemblement pour la Calédonie dans la République (RPCR) over the Territory's economy. The political will of the Kanak movement and of the progressive forces in the country to tackle the imbalances inherent in the Caledonian colonial system contrasted with the stalling by the State and the conservative policy of the local right wing, which was in the majority in the Territorial Congress and controlled the country's economy. A true decolonization policy required that efforts should be made to overcome the Territory's increasing dependence on the metropolis. Certain areas within the jurisdiction of the State, were still not open for discussion; the same went for areas falling within the jurisdiction of the Territory of New Caledonia, represented by the predominantly anti-independence Congress. Thus the attitude of the two other signatories was making it difficult to carry out the reforms which were needed for harmonious and balanced development to benefit all sectors of the Caledonian population. That attitude carried within it the seeds of a political, economic and ethnic partitioning of the Territory which the people would not be able to accept.

5. Six years after the Matignon Accords, FLNKS was still calling for major reforms in significant areas. There was a tendency to monopolization of the economy by a privileged class of RPCR members which was influential in Grand Nouméa. That trend favoured major projects and left little scope for local initiative which would help people become involved in building the country. In the educational sector, although more and more Kanak children were entering primary school, the selection processes at the secondary level always favoured European children; the policy of adapting syllabuses to the realities of the country was being hampered by a system which focused too much on metropolitan realities and by the bureaucracy of the French Ministry of National Education.

6. In the social sector, there was a shortage of rental accommodation, urban accommodation was prohibitively expensive, and there was no policy to provide housing to the most disadvantaged people. The economic and social situation was becoming increasingly difficult; the mining sector had been particularly affected. The social climate was increasingly tense and social conflicts reflected the growing impatience of the people at the absence of substantive reform. Unemployment was high, especially among young people; and budgetary difficulties resulting from budgetary restrictions imposed by the French Government at the national level were making it impossible to implement programmes in the provinces.

7. The progressive deterioration of the situation in New Caledonia demonstrated the increasing difficulty of maintaining the partnership among the signatories to the Matignon Accords; responsibility for that situation lay entirely with the other two signatories, RPCR and the French Government. For the past year, RPCR had taken a negative attitude of maintaining the status quo at the local level. The main concerns of the French Government were metropolitan because of the economic difficulties in France and above all because of the presidential elections of 1995; it had therefore decided not to take any initiative in New Caledonia.

8. The situation in New Caledonia gave rise to an inertia which made it impossible to hold the consultations necessary for the implementation of substantive reforms and to enter into discussions among the signatories to the Matignon Accords on the statutory future of the country. With only four years to go before the 1998 referendum, there had been no discussion on the organization of the referendum and the provision of objective information to the population. If those discussions were not begun straight away, there was no guarantee that they would take place under the next legislature.

9. At the most recent meeting of the Committee to Monitor the Matignon Agreements, held at Nouméa on 15 September 1994, Mr. Perben, the French Minister for Overseas Departments and Territories, had spoken of a new momentum in the implementation of the Accords; FLNKS hoped that a dynamic partnership would be re-established so that the schedule for 1995 and 1998 could be maintained.

10. The situation in New Caledonia did not always correspond to what might be expected on the part of France, the land of human rights, which was responsible for the colonization and therefore for the decolonization of New Caledonia. If France did not assist the decolonization process, it would be failing to meet its obligations and fulfil its historic responsibility in New Caledonia and towards the international community. FLNKS believed that independence was the only viable route for all segments of the Caledonian population; moreover, that route was finding favour among the most disadvantaged groups in the country, particularly the non-Kanak peoples. FLNKS hoped that the Committee would also take into account the resolution of the twenty-fifth session of the South Pacific Forum held in August 1994.

11. FLNKS called on the United Nations to keep New Caledonia on the list of countries to be decolonized; to reaffirm its support for the decolonization of New Caledonia and the independence of the indigenous Kanak people; to do everything possible, in the context of the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, to ensure that France officially endorsed the decolonization of New Caledonia and clarified the various elements of the 1998 referendum; to organize the 1998 referendum in accordance with its principles and practices; to monitor more closely the implementation of the Matignon and Oudinot Accords; and to encourage local partners to implement reforms in order to prepare the country for independence and call upon them to initiate discussions immediately on the future of the country.

12. Ms. Winslow withdrew.

AGENDA ITEM 18: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES (Territories not covered under other agenda items) (continued) (A/49/23 (Part II, Part V, chap. VIII, Part VI, chap. IX and Part VII, chap. X, A/49/287, 381 and 492); A/AC.109/1179-1183, 1185-1186, 1188-1190, 1192-1195, 1197; S/1994/283 and Add.1 and Add.1/Corr.1, S/1994/819)

AGENDA ITEM 81: INFORMATION FROM NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES TRANSMITTED UNDER ARTICLE 73 e OF THE CHARTER OF THE UNITED NATIONS (continued) (A/49/23 (Part IV, chap. VII) and 384 and Add.1)

AGENDA ITEM 82: ACTIVITIES OF FOREIGN ECONOMIC AND OTHER INTERESTS WHICH IMPEDE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES IN TERRITORIES UNDER COLONIAL DOMINATION (continued) (A/49/23 (Part III, chap. IV); A/AC.109/1191)

AGENDA ITEM 83: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES BY THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS ASSOCIATED WITH THE UNITED NATIONS (continued) (A/49/23 (Part IV, chap. VI) and 261 and Add.1; A/AC.109/L.1824; E/1994/114)

AGENDA ITEM 12: REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (continued) (A/49/3 (Chaps. V (sect. C) and IX))

AGENDA ITEM 84: OFFERS BY MEMBER STATES OF STUDY AND TRAINING FACILITIES FOR INHABITANTS OF NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES (continued) (A/49/413)

13. Mr. PHOMMAHAXAY (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said that the Declaration on decolonization had been a powerful stimulus and provided legal, political and moral support in the struggle of colonial peoples for freedom and independence. However, the success achieved should not give rise to complacency, because the process was not fully complete. Many obstacles still impeded the progress of the peoples of colonial and Non-Self-Governing Territories towards achieving their legitimate aspirations to self-determination and independence. His delegation fully supported the Plan of Action for the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, and believed that the international community should do everything possible to create conditions which would enable the peoples of dependent Territories to adopt policies adapted to their specific problems, particularly in the context of regional cooperation and integration, and to promote economic and social development and preserve their cultural identity, while giving priority to strengthening and diversifying their economies; and should make a concerted effort to help them improve their institutional and administrative resources and develop their human resources. In a favourable environment of that kind, the peoples of colonial and Non-Self-Governing Territories would have a real chance to exercise their legitimate rights.

14. Certain sectors were continuing to engage in not only economic activities but also military and other activities which could impede the accession of peoples to independence. The presence of military bases in certain colonial and Non-Self-Governing Territories was not designed to reduce unemployment; military bases and activities were actually being used to maintain control in different regions of the world. Such activities must stop and Non-Self-Governing Territories must not be drawn into activities or hostile acts directed against sovereign and independent States. Furthermore, the Territories should not be used for nuclear experiments, the disposal of nuclear waste or the deployment of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

15. The objectives of the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism could only be achieved through concrete action corresponding to the wishes of the peoples of colonial and Non-Self-Governing Territories.

16. Mr. BATAINEH (Jordan) said that despite the negative effects of the cold war, the majority of previously Non-Self-Governing Territories had gained their independence; that was a historic achievement for the United Nations. South Africa had also had its first democratic elections, and Jordan welcomed the end of apartheid and the inception of a united, non-racial and democratic society in that country.

17. However, despite the long interval since General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) of 14 December 1960 and the relatively harmonious atmosphere which now characterized work in the United Nations, there were still a number of Non-Self-Governing Territories. The international community should give the granting of independence the priority it deserved, so that every country, irrespective of size, geographical position or number of inhabitants, could enjoy self-determination. Administering Powers therefore had responsibility to establish the political, economic and social conditions which would enable those Territories to move peacefully towards self-determination, while maintaining control over their national resources, and ensuring their rights to own and use them. Relevant United Nations agencies had a responsibility to provide assistance to those Territories in order to accelerate their cultural, social and economic advancement.

18. Administering Powers should continue to cooperate in facilitating visits of United Nations delegations to Non-Self-Governing Territories. Such visits provided essential information on conditions in those countries, and increased the United Nations ability to help the peoples of those Territories reach their goals. Administering Powers should also participate in the work of and cooperate with the Special Committee. No military, economic or other activity should be undertaken which would be prejudicial to the interests of the peoples of the Territories or impede progress towards ending colonization and achieving self-determination and independence.

19. Mr. AHMED (India) said that decolonization had always been one of the most important activities of the United Nations; the end of the cold war had generated new opportunities for the United Nations and the world community to achieve that goal of ridding the world of colonialism before the end of the century on the basis of the Plan of Action for the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism.

20. Since 1993, further success had been achieved on several fronts. Meanwhile, despite recurring difficulties in the case of Western Sahara, recent developments gave rise to the expectation that a referendum would be held in the Territory over the next few months. His delegation fully supported the efforts being made by the Secretary-General in that direction. In the Malvinas and New Caledonia, his delegation was heartened by the ongoing dialogue between the parties concerned and encouraged them to build upon the understandings already reached, in a spirit of cooperation. His delegation underlined the need for

dialogue and discussion between the Non-Self-Governing Territories and the administering Powers as a basic instrument to achieve decolonization, in accordance with the letter and spirit of the Declaration on decolonization.

21. Each of the small island Territories in the Pacific and Caribbean had the inherent right to decide on its own political future. It was for the people of those Territories to choose the political system for their own governance, while the administering Powers had a responsibility to protect their vulnerable economies and ecologies and respect the wishes of the Territories.

22. The objective of complete decolonization had almost been reached; the last few steps were often the most difficult, but the United Nations must not waver in its efforts to eradicate colonialism by the end of the century.

23. Mr. RANDRIAMALALA (Madagascar) said that his delegation welcomed the initiative by the New Zealand Government of inviting a United Nations visiting mission to Tokelau in July 1994 and the assurances it had given that it would honour its obligations to the United Nations in respect of the Territory and respect the freely expressed wishes of its people with regard to their future status. His delegation encouraged other administering Powers to do the same, since United Nations visiting missions were an effective means of assessing the situation in Non-Self-Governing Territories in addition to receiving information provided under Article 73 e of the Charter and helped enhance the ability of the United Nations to assist the peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories in achieving the objectives laid down in the Declaration on decolonization.

24. Political independence was only a first stage and must be accompanied by economic independence. His delegation welcomed the efforts made by certain specialized agencies and other United Nations bodies to assist the Non-Self-Governing Territories; however, that assistance must be intensified. The administering Powers had a duty, in view of the extreme fragility of the economies of small island Territories and their vulnerability to natural disasters, to promote the economic and social development and preserve the cultural identity of those Territories and ensure that their natural resources were safeguarded for future development; they must also take all necessary measures to protect their environments. In order to ensure the future stability of those Territories, immigration must be strictly monitored so that the indigenous peoples did not become a minority in their land of origin.

25. The maintenance of colonial situations was incompatible with the ideal of universal peace of the United Nations. Over the decades, through the implementation of the Declaration on decolonization, the process of decolonization had accelerated. The most significant achievement had been the accession to independence of Namibia. The peace process under way in the Middle East to establish a sovereign Palestinian State was another important development. Despite the progress made in decolonization, however, colonialism had not been completely eliminated, and United Nations activities in that area must be accorded priority if the objective of eliminating colonialism by the year 2000 was to be achieved.

26. Mr. ZVANKO (Belarus) said it was to be hoped that the problems which had occurred at various stages of the settlement of the Western Sahara issue would not recur, that the Identification Commission would finish its work and that the United Nations would be able to carry out its mission as fully as possible in conjunction with the Organization of African Unity. The Republic of Belarus was prepared to encourage that process by making observers available to the United Nations during the referendum. Constructive dialogue under the auspices of the United Nations on the questions of East Timor, the Malvinas, New Caledonia, Tokelau and other Territories had also given cause for hope.

27. Noting that the United Nations still faced a number of major and urgent tasks in the field of decolonization, he outlined additional measures that needed to be taken in order to ensure that the peoples of the 18 remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories would be able to determine their own future. Key elements were a spirit of constructive dialogue between all Parties involved in settling a particular issue and the political will and firm intention to bring a matter to a successful conclusion. The administering Powers had an important role to play in that regard, in that it was up to them to create conditions for the free expression of political will and the establishment of an economic foundation which would subsequently enable a young State to develop independently.

28. The example set by New Zealand in providing information to the Special Committee on decolonization and accepting visiting missions was highly commendable. He also noted with satisfaction the measures taken by France, in New Caledonia, to encourage the political, economic and social development of the Territory, notably protection of the environment, efforts to combat drug abuse and illegal drug trafficking, and development of the Territory's communications with other countries in the region.

29. His delegation wished to stress the importance of cooperation with the relevant organs of the United Nations and its specialized agencies. A spirit of constructive cooperation should prevail in all international forums dealing with decolonization and should be embodied in an appreciation of the actual problems facing a particular administering Power. Constructive cooperation should also extend to the wording of all documents adopted on the work of those forums.

30. Noting the enhanced role of information as a means of mobilizing world public opinion in support of efforts by peoples in Non-Self-Governing Territories to gain independence, the Belarusian delegation considered that circulation of full and accurate information about the progress of decolonization was an important component of the process.

31. Mr. SRIWIDJAJA (Indonesia) said that Indonesia and the non-aligned countries had from the outset had a long-standing and deep-rooted commitment to decolonization. The Non-Aligned Movement's efforts had been vitally supportive of and complementary to the endeavours of the United Nations in that field. Accordingly, the non-aligned countries had worked towards carrying out the United Nations action plan for the implementation of the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism.

32. Noting that the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories shared many characteristics of small island developing States owing to their small size, geographical location, size of population, limited natural resources and vulnerable economies and ecologies, he stressed that the people of each Territory had to determine the nature of their own future status. It was of paramount importance that the populations concerned should be able to exercise freely their inalienable right to self-determination in a form reflecting their interests and aspirations in accordance with the provisions of the Declaration. Such an approach would include educating the people on the various options available to them so that they could objectively judge for themselves what was in their best interests. The need to promote balanced economic development and help the Territories to achieve the greatest level of self-sufficiency was equally important; United Nations specialized agencies and other international organizations should be involved in that process. The Indonesian delegation also stressed the importance of disseminating information in the field of decolonization through seminars, publications and other relevant activities.

33. Mr. Samana (Papua New Guinea), Vice-Chairman, took the chair.

34. Mr. JELBAN (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said it was gratifying to see the South African delegation in the Committee, after the success of that country in ending apartheid and establishing unity and democracy. Eradicating colonialism was a basic duty of the United Nations. Since the adoption of the Declaration on decolonization in 1960, many countries had achieved self-determination. Several, however, remained dependent: that constituted an evasion of the administering Power's responsibility to implement the Declaration, and a challenge to the international community. The remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories were as deserving of self-determination as those which had already achieved it.

35. The role of the United Nations in implementing the Declaration had thus not yet been fully completed. His country fully supported the efforts of all Non-Self-Governing Territories to achieve self-determination, and their right to economic and social development. He appealed to the United Nations to support economic and political development in those territories and to ensure that occupying Powers did not build any military installations there or undertake nuclear testing, or engage in the proliferation or stockpiling of nuclear or other weapons of mass destruction prejudicial to the safety of those territories.

36. Mr. SAMADI (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that it was the duty of the Committee to remain firm in its commitment to grant every people and country still living under any form of colonial rule the opportunity to exercise its right to self-determination and choose freely how to determine its own future. An adequate economic basis upon which Non-Self-Governing Territories could fully exercise their right to self-determination was important, and activities of foreign economic interests could pose an obstacle to the process of decolonization: the people of colonial Territories were the rightful owners of their natural resources, which should be developed in ways that promoted their political, economic, social and educational advancement. The presence of

military bases and installations constituted a similar obstacle to the implementation of the Declaration. The relevant resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly and the Special Committee had called on administering Powers to terminate military activities in the Territories and reiterated that those Territories and their adjacent areas should be free from the testing of nuclear wastes or deployment of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction.

37. Sending visiting missions was the best means of obtaining first-hand information on the conditions in the Territories, and the administering Powers should be urged to allow such visits.

38. Mr. AL-ATTAR (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the United Nations had failed to prevent war and regional strife, nor had it succeeded in crystallizing a plan for collective security based on international legality and justice. The eradication of colonialism was perhaps the United Nations greatest achievement to date. However, there were still 17 countries which did not enjoy self-determination and independence. While they were mostly small islands, they were none the less entitled to self-determination in accordance with their wishes. It was therefore important for administering Powers to cooperate with the Special Committee by transmitting information to it regularly, pursuant to Article 73 e of the Charter, or by facilitating the sending by the Committee of visiting delegations to those Territories. In order to achieve the eradication of colonialism by the end of the century, the cooperation of the administering Powers was essential in order to study the case of each Territory and find an appropriate settlement in accordance with the wishes of its inhabitants. The people of Tokelau had expressed the wish to enter freely into a federation with New Zealand. That success was due to the cooperation of the administering Power with the Committee. It was vital that United Nations specialized agencies should increase their aid programmes to people of the Non-Self-Governing Territories in order to support their social and economic development.

39. Syria had been one of the first States to participate in the work of the Special Decolonization Committee, because of its conviction that international peace and security could only be achieved by the complete eradication of colonialism in all shapes and forms. The present relaxed international climate, characterized by a universal desire for peace and security and respect for the aspirations of peoples, imposed on the international community the obligation to do whatever was necessary to ensure that universal self-determination was achieved. Greater priority should be given to the concerns of the Committee, so that the world could enter the twenty-first century free for ever of the vestiges of colonialism.

40. Mr. LAMPTEY (Ghana) said that he hoped all concerned in the settlement plan for Western Sahara would cooperate fully with the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) to make the whole exercise, from voter registration through actual balloting, transparently free and fair. He noted the call by the Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguia el-Hamra y de Río de Oro (Frente POLISARIO) for dialogue with the Moroccan Party in order to create an atmosphere of confidence before the referendum, and endorsed such direct talks.

41. He noted with satisfaction the progress made in Israeli-Palestinian negotiations and the Israeli-Jordanian common agenda, and entertained the hope of faster Israeli-Syrian and Israeli-Lebanese settlements, together with a resolution of outstanding issues over Palestine.

42. On the question of Tokelau, he stressed that everything possible had to be done to raise the consciousness of the people of that Territory so that, whatever choice they made regarding their future status, they would be aware of the full implications of their choice.

43. He regretted that some administering Powers that wished to pass as the champions of democracy and international legality had still failed to cooperate with the Committee in pursuit of the objectives of the United Nations Decade on the Eradication of Colonialism. He called on all countries to move with the times and cooperate with the Special Committee. He invited the Committee to support the draft resolutions to be put before the General Assembly calling on the administering Powers concerned to halt forthwith all their economic and military activities and arrangements in the Territories under their control where those interests posed a threat to the future economic development of the Territories and jeopardized the freedom of the inhabitants to decide on their future status.

44. Mr. MERIMEE (France) said that his delegation wished to report on developments in recent years in New Caledonia, and especially on the application of the Matignon Accords. It did so despite its Government's continued reservations regarding the competence of the United Nations to deal with the question - New Caledonia being an overseas territory of France and hence governed not by Article 73 of the United Nations Charter but by national jurisdiction, in accordance with Article 2, paragraph VII, of the Charter.

45. Since the Matignon Accords had been signed in 1988, all political forces in New Caledonia had shown a dramatically different determination to work constructively for a peaceful future, in keeping with the three main stipulations of the Accords: the vote of self-determination to be held in 1998 by eligible members of the population, the decentralization of the administration of the Territory's three provinces, and the active promotion of appropriate economic and social development. Follow-up committees had met yearly, and even more often, to evaluate and redirect the implementation of the Accords.

46. In the past six years, the institutional arrangements under the Accords had been put into place. The three New Caledonian provinces were exercising broad new powers through assemblies elected by universal suffrage and were heavily engaged in technical development, economic activities and job promotion. The French Government's objective was a balanced economic development that would create employment in all regions, and to that end it had signed a number of development contracts with each province that reflected provincial priorities. Large-scale infrastructural programmes had also been set up and were progressing satisfactorily, and an economic and social plan was under way to reverse a slump in nickel exports. A major training programme was already showing very

encouraging results, as reflected in the improved scores in secondary school and vocational examinations, the building of new schools to accommodate an expanding number of students, and a professional training programme specifically for Melanesians. Culturally, there was the concomitant promotion of the Melanesian sense of community identity, especially through the Kanak Cultural Development Agency. The French Government was, with its New Caledonian partners, planning to focus in future on youth programmes and on urban, housing or economic diversification issues. On balance, then, the assessment of the past six years was positive.

47. His delegation noted with satisfaction that the current year's draft resolution on New Caledonia took account of that positive situation, and of the ongoing dialogue between parties under the auspices of the French Government; and France would accordingly not object to the draft resolution or request a vote, although it could not associate itself with it.

48. Thanks to the Matignon Accords, New Caledonia's political, economic, scientific and cultural contacts with neighbouring countries in the region had expanded. The French Government set great store by the territory's integration into the South Pacific community and would continue to encourage it. It was also determined to further the Territory's interest and prosperity so that its inhabitants could exercise their right to self-determination in 1998 under the best possible conditions.

49. Mr. MWAMBULUKUTU (United Republic of Tanzania) said that in order to accomplish the Committee's goal of eradicating colonialism by the year 2000 all members must cooperate fully with the Special Committee on decolonization. Each of the administering Powers of the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories, in particular, ought to state its case at the Special Committee level in order to minimize in advance some of the concerns that surfaced when the Fourth Committee considered decolonization matters. The Special Committee's report on Tokelau exemplified the progress that could be made when there was genuine cooperation between it, the administering Power and the inhabitants of the Territory, and other administering Powers should follow New Zealand's example in inviting United Nations visiting missions and in fully involving the people in determining their status.

50. In Western Sahara, it was regrettable that the long-awaited referendum on self-determination remained stalled because of voter-eligibility issues. Both the Moroccan Government and the Frente POLISARIO should cooperate fully with the Secretary-General and the Identification Commissioner in implementing the agreed settlement plan so as to achieve the goal of a free and fair referendum.

51. Mr. MANAKARATNE (Sri Lanka) observed that the small size of the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories and their limited population and resources should in no way diminish the importance the Committee attached to their decolonization. Indeed, those factors made them more vulnerable and in need of particular attention. His Government appreciated the cooperative and constructive response of the various administering Powers which had contributed to the progress made in decolonization over the last three decades, thus

enabling consensus to prevail over confrontation and the long-term interests of the peoples concerned to be respected. Sri Lanka was confident that the administering Powers would continue to show the same spirit in ensuring the transition of the remaining dependent Territories.

52. Like all other Member States, Sri Lanka rejoiced at the turn of events in South Africa, which had taken its rightful place in the comity of nations, and had a vital contribution to make not only to the future of the African continent but also to the global community.

53. Political self-determination was but a first step towards national self-assertion: the economic future of the dependent Territories was crucial if their peoples were to raise their living standards in a highly competitive and complex world. As all who had emerged from long periods of colonial rule were well aware, factors both internal and external could reduce independence to a mere legal formality unless it had solid economic foundations. The administering Powers and the specialized agencies of the United Nations and other regional bodies had an obligation to ensure that in the post-colonial period the former Territories were helped to preserve their independence and basic socio-economic structures. Foreign economic assistance, sought freely and given without coercive and exploitative conditions, would further their welfare and be of mutual benefit.

54. The people of each Territory should be able to decide on their future free from pressure, and it was for the United Nations to ensure that they did. Self-determination should not become an instrument for the promotion, through force and militancy, of the views of narrow and unrepresentative groups of people within the Territories, who used the process for their own purposes outside the colonial context in which the concept of self-determination was understood by the United Nations. The new phenomenon of separatist groups in many newly independent countries must not be allowed to take root. Sri Lanka was pleased that in many cases direct talks were being held to settle the remaining disputes by way of dialogue and negotiation. Pragmatic approaches had always brought forth the desired results.

55. Mr. SNOUSSI (Morocco) recalled that Morocco had always been willing to cooperate fully with the Secretary-General to find a just and lasting solution to the so-called question of the Sahara. It had been the one to suggest a referendum, to be held under United Nations auspices in order to ensure the proper impartiality. Morocco had worked with the Secretary-General in his untiring efforts to achieve a settlement plan acceptable to both parties, and in 1992 that plan had begun to be put into effect by the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO).

56. Among the stumbling-blocks were the criteria for identifying persons eligible to participate in the referendum. As the Secretary-General had indicated in his report (A/49/492, para. 12) the delays had been due entirely to the other party and the countries that supported it, since Morocco had long since accepted the criteria set out in Security Council resolution 725 (1991). Consequently, his Government welcomed the solution to the problem provided in

Security Council resolution 907 (1994), which, as indicated in the Secretary-General's report (para. 17), had been accepted by both parties. As a result of in-depth consultations, it had also been possible to resolve the issue of Organization of African Unity (OAU) observers. In short, the United Nations operation was proceeding satisfactorily and definite progress had been made since late August 1994 in identifying potential voters.

57. It must be borne in mind that the exclusive responsibility for organizing and conducting the referendum rested with the Secretary-General and his Special Representative, under the supervision of the Security Council, pursuant to Security Council resolutions 809 (1993) and 907 (1994). The Secretary-General had in his report outlined the timetable for implementing the remaining elements of the settlement plan. Morocco reiterated its full readiness to cooperate in hastening its application so that the referendum could be held as soon as possible.

58. The Committee, in making its recommendations on the question, could not, of course, contradict the provisions made by the Security Council or become a forum for the claims of one party and its promoters. His delegation favoured dialogue and consensus in the settlement of disputes, but they could not be used as an excuse for delaying implementation of the settlement plan accepted by both parties. Since, as indicated in document A/49/492 (para. 5), objections by the other party to the negotiations set up by the Special Representative had prevented them from being held, it was preferable for the Committee not to make any recommendation relating to dialogue, but rather to leave such matters to the Secretary-General. The settlement plan was well on its way to achievement and all members must take a responsible attitude so as not to jeopardize the process.

59. Morocco was not a colonial State. To claim otherwise was to insult the historical record and the shared, heroic struggle of the people of the Maghreb against colonialism, and also to distort flagrantly the question of so-called Western Sahara. The problem of the Sahara had become the international community's problem, and the international community, with Morocco's consent, had chosen to resolve it through the Security Council and the Secretary-General. He must be left to do his work. The Maghreb had other serious concerns, faced as it was with a violent crisis of unprecedented extremism that was diverting its energies away from the urgent task of union and development. All members of the Arab Maghreb Union should join efforts to attack their real problems in order to ensure stability and development in the region.

The meeting rose at 5.55 p.m.